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SOME CAUSES THAT ARE LEADING TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GREEK FROM SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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The value of the study of Greek has often been questioned, but probably never more so than at the present time. That the subject has suffered a marked decrease in numbers in the past fifteen years is not to be denied, while in actual enrolment of pupils the loss appears small. Still, in view of the increase of students in secondary schools, the decline is rather discouraging to the enthusiastic Greek teacher. Where, in 1891, 25,000 pupils in secondary schools were studying Greek, the reports for 1904 show 18,500 enrolled in Greek classes.

The condition in some of the states, so far as it has been possible to ascertain from statistics at hand, is as follows:

According to the Regents' Reports of the New York state public schools, the number taking Greek in 1895 was 1,470; in 1905 there were 1,250. This seems not a great decrease; but in 1900 there were 2,260 enrolled in Greek classes. Then came an action on the part of most of the colleges granting the A.B. degree without Greek, and immediately there occurred a falling-off in the number taking this subject. The University of Syracuse, however, refused to make any change in its requirements for the arts degree, and seems to have justified itself, for there are now in Syracuse University more literary and classical students than in either Cornell or Columbia. The Syracuse High School too reports that they have had no loss in their Greek enrolment in the past five years.

In Michigan, within three years after the passing of this same regulation by the State University, only 50 per cent. as many students as before presented Greek for college entrance.

In Illinois there are few public schools where Greek is still

taught. There are no regular classes in the public schools of Chicago. A few pupils are being taught outside of the prescribed work by a few of the teachers. Oak Park has two small classes, and Streator has a class this year for the first time. Evanston still continues its work in Greek, and I am told that there are classes at Peoria and Ottawa. Other than these, except for the little town of Sparta, loyal to its Greek name, I know of no public schools in the state where Greek is taught.

In Minnesota the state high-school inspector fought Greek out of the schools, so that now the subject is taught in only four of the public high schools.

In Massachusetts the same sort of opposition was made by many of the superintendents; but, in spite of it, Smith College has never had so large a freshman class in Greek as that of this year.

In Cleveland, Greek is still taught in three of the city high schools. In the East School—a comparatively new school—the beginning class of this year is the largest in its history, but the classes in the other two schools show a decrease. In Springfield, O., there are still some classes, but the course of study has been changed so that hereafter only two years of Greek will be offered in the high school.

These are reports from public schools only, where the decrease would naturally be greatest. Many private schools still have large classes in Greek; though the same reasons that cause a decadence in the public schools would affect in a measure the private ones. Dr. McPherson, of Lawrenceville, reports that, while ten years ago 143 boys were studying Greek, there are this year but 66. In giving the reason for this, Dr. McPherson says:

Of course, there is the alleged difficulty of Greek, the growing popularity of scientific courses, and the changes in college requirements. In our school the last reason is probably most decisive.

Dr. Leacock, of Phillips Exeter Academy, makes the following statement:

This year 100 students out of 400 are taking Greek—a proportion of 1 to 3. Ten years ago the proportion was 1 to 2.

In commenting on the change he says:

In general boys take French and German in preference to Greek, because they believe these to be easier. Most boys live in the present. Fathers who had Greek generally see that their boys take it. Fathers who did not take Greek generally see that their sons take modern language for practical reasons.

Herbert Spencer has said: "Parents dress their children's minds, as they do their bodies, in the prevailing fashion." Unfortunate it is that the prevailing style is not Greek. Then, too, the spirit of the time is practical and utilitarian. And so it comes that a crowd of sciences has caught the imagination of the public, and strenuously insisted that wisdom is born with them. Of course, it depends largely on what one means by "practical." It must be admitted that a course composed largely of culture subjects will not enable a student, immediately upon graduation, to command so lucrative a position as if he had given his time only to applied science. But surely a curriculum which has in the past produced men who have risen to the highest places in all fields is truly practical and those educators who would change it, have still to demonstrate that the substitutes will round out a course in the same high sense.

Senator Hoar, in an article which he wrote on the value of classical study, once said:

Of one thing I feel confident, that is, that the men I have known in public life, in the pulpit, and at the bar, have been men who have been good Latin and Greek scholars who have kept up their love and study of these through life; especially have those who have been lovers of Greek shown great superiority in effective public speaking.

Charles Francis Adams, who in a Phi Beta Kappa address at Harvard about twenty years ago did more perhaps than any other man to discredit Greek, took it all back in his address at Columbia last spring, and said:

I would away with arm's length lecture-room education, I would somehow get back to contact of mind with mind. I would make Latin or Greek a compulsory study till the day of graduation—the one royal road to all that is finest in letters and art.

At a symposium held at Ann Arbor last March on "The Value of the Study of the Classics as a Preparation for Medicine

and Engineering," Dr. Vaughn, dean of the Department of Surgery, said:

There has never been found a better training for the thinking apparatus of the young than Latin and Greek. Carelessness and superficiality are incompatible with thorough study of these subjects. Observation is sharpened and perception becomes more delicate, so a habit of attention to detail is formed, which will be of inestimable value should medicine be chosen as a profession. And so it seems to me regrettable that two years of good solid work in Greek are not demanded as an unconditional requirement for admission to medical schools.

Professor Sadler, of the Department of Engineering said:

Engineering demands definiteness and conciseness of thought, and one of the chief difficulties on the part of engineers is to overcome a tendency to generalization on the part of students. While it may be the opinion of many that some elementary form of science may accomplish this result, I venture to suggest that studies of this nature, as a general rule, have a result diametrically opposite, and lead to vagueness rather than concreteness, and that as a means of cultivating ideas of exactness, the humanities are *facile princeps*.

Next as a cause for the decline in the study of Greek is the place Commercial subjects have been given in the high schools. These are for the most part elected by pupils who desire to add to their credits by what is known as a "snap" course. There is no progressive development in such study as this, and for these students education is merely an aimless *Odyssey* from classroom to classroom, with the mistaken impression that anything is education which fills up the time.

That Greek is no longer required for the A.B. degree in college is one of the strong reasons causing its decline in the public schools. Then, too, especially in smaller schools, Greek and Latin are usually taught by the same instructor; and as the demand for Latin is greater than the demand for Greek, the Greeks are forced to yield.

Further, the difficulties of the subject deter some from its study. We are told that modern languages would be a far better investment of time; for the proficiency gained in Greek is not commensurate with the energy expended. I believe that the student should meet some subjects that are difficult and master

them; that he should not be allowed to elect on the lines of least resistance; for the ordinary pupil will choose an easy subject, if he can; and few there are who realize that the fact that a subject is difficult for them is an indication that it may prove a good training.

But, in addition to these general causes, there have been some special reasons which have been operative in driving Greek from the Chicago schools. About five years ago a regulation was made that no class should be started in any subject with fewer than twenty members, and, should the number fall below fifteen the class must be discontinued. This applied not merely to the first year of a subject, but to all the years. Even with a beginning class of thirty-five, it might happen that, for various reasons, the membership of a class in Greek might fall below twenty at the beginning of the second year. This was disheartening for the boy or girl who needed the work for college preparation. So, with the uncertainty of being able to finish, many a pupil has been forced to substitute something else for the Greek he really wished. In addition to this, there was for a time a rule in force that one year's work in a language should receive no credit. So, if one year's work had been done, and the class forced to disband, the pupil lost not only his chance for college preparation in the subject, but was given no credit for his one year of hard study. This rule was so manifestly unfair that it was soon rescinded. However, Greek has not yet had time to recover and begin a new lease of life in the public schools of Chicago.

I am not one of those who believe that all our boys and girls should study Greek. But it is to be regretted that those who would gladly take it are shut out from the opportunity of doing so. Of course, there are private schools, but these are expensive, and often those who desire most to take Greek cannot afford to pay for it.

The course of study as at present arranged seems to give a smattering of many subjects, but only a fraction of the substantial foundation of fifteen years ago, and seems to count of more value a ready smartness than sound scholarship and good preparation to meet the experiences of life. But there are some hopeful

signs. There is a growing feeling that the pendulum is already swinging back. Dr. Leacock, already quoted, says: "I am not alarmed about the future of Greek. If I read the signs of the times correctly, the opinion is slowly forming that French and German as substitutes for Greek have not vindicated themselves; useful as they are, they cannot do the work that Greek has done so well." Professor Moss, of the University of Illinois, says: "I think there are visible signs of a change from the deluge we have been suffering for the past ten years. But we cannot expect to recover in a day from all the mischief that has been done." Mr. Merrill, one of the trustees of Phillips Exeter, says: "In my opinion, there will be a change of attitude on this subject, so strong that it will be a surprise to many of the educators of this country."

We hope that they are true prophets, and that the beginning of this era is near. When men shall feel that life consists, not merely in the abundance of goods possessed, but also in the ability to understand and appreciate the greatest products of art, architecture, and literature, then Greek will again take its place in the curricula of our high schools and colleges.